

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 0583

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: CI, PFOR

SUBJECT: A MORE SUBTLE CHILEAN FOREIGN POLICY?

REF: SANTIAGO 0542

1. SUMMARY. IN REGULAR FRIDAY PRESS CONFERENCE JAN 24, UNDERSECY FONMINISTRY COLLADOS SIGNALLED SLIGHT SHIFT IN EMPHASIS IN FOREIGN POLICY THAT COULD HELP CHIEAN FOREIGN IMAGE IF FOLLOWED THROUGH IN PRACTICE. END SUMMARY.
2. COLLADOS SAID THAT "FOREIGN OFFENSIVE" AGAINST CHILE DURING 1974 HAD COMPELLED GOC TO TAKE FORCEFUL POSITION OF RESISTANCE. THIS ATTITUDE WORKED BECAUSE INTENSITY OF ATTACK HAD DIMINISHED, AND ATTACKERS HAD DISQUALIFIED THEMSELVES BY "INFAMY" OF THEIR CRITICISM. CHILE THUS IS NOW IN POSITION TO BE LESS AGGRESSIVE ABROAD, BUT INITIATIVE WILL BE MAINTAINED. COLLADOS EMPHASIZED IN THIS CONTEXT THAT CHILEAN ANTI-MARXISM IS DOMESTIC, AND THAT ABROAD "WE ARE FRIENDS OF THOSE WHO RESPECT US AND WANT TO BE FRIENDS WITH US." REITERATED KIND WORDS OF GEN PINOCHET (DEC 31 SPEECH) FOR ROMANIA AND PRC IN THIS CONTEXT.
3. COLLADOS ACKNOWLEDGED THAT MORE RAPID GRANTING OF SAFE

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CONDUCTS TO POLITICAL ASYLEES AND RELEASE OF DETAINEES

REFLECTED DOMESTIC CONDITIONS (WHICH "EL MERUURIO" INTERPRETED TO MEAN THAT PUBLIC TRANQUILLITY REIGNING IN CHILE PERMITS ACTIONS THAT SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS WOULD NOT HAVE ALLOWED EARLIER).

4. COMMENT. COLLADOS MAY BE TRYING TO EXPLAIN TO CHILEAN PUBLIC THAT RELEASE OF SENIOR DETAINEES HAS BECOME POSSIBLE BECAUSE OF BETTER SECURITY SITUATION AND REPULSE OF FOREIGN "ATTACK," AND DID NOT COME ABOUT AS RESULT OF FOREIGN PRESSURE. EMBASSY AGREES WITH THIS TO THE EXTENT THAT WE DOUBT GOC WOULD UNDERTAKE ACTIONS TO IMPROVE ITS IMAGE THAT WOULD SIGNIFICANTLY COMPROMISE INTERNAL SECURITY. IT MAY ALSO BE THAT GOC OFFICIALS BELIEVE EFFECTIVENESS OF FOREIGN ANTI-CHILEAN CAMPAIGN HAS PEAKED. THIS WAS EXPLANATION GIVEN BY FONMIN PUBLIC AFFAIRS ADVISER ASHTON TO MILGRP OFFICER FOR DECISION TO ALLOW ENTRY OF WASHINGTON POST'S NOVITSKI AND NY TIMES' KANDELL (REFTEL). ASHTON SAID US OPINION HAD SO TURNED TO OTHER PROBLEMS (U.S. ECONOMY, MIDDLE EAST TENSIONS) THAT GOC COULD NOW TAKE THE RISK OF ALLOWING THOSE REPORTERS TO ENTER AGAIN. (ASHTON ADDED THAT HIS HEAD DEPENDED ON HIS JUDGMENT BEING CORRECT.) SIMILAR COMMENT WAS MADE BY SENIOR NAVY ADMIRAL.

5. COLLADOS STATEMENT IS FURTHER EVIDENCE THAT GOC, AS "EL MERCURIO" PUT IT IN JAN 26 EDITORIAL, "HAS ACQUIRED FULL COMPREHENSION OF NEED TO IMPROVE INTERNATIONAL OPINION CONCERNING WHAT HAS HAPPENED AND IS HAPPENING IN CHILE."

6. IF CARRIED OUT IN PRACTICE, THIS MORE RELAXED ATTITUDE WOULD LOGICALLY RESULT IN FURTHER MOVES IN HUMAN RIGHTS FIELD, AND IN A GENERALLY SOFTER, MORE AMLEABLE LINE IN CHILEAN DIPLOMACY. RECENT GOC INDICATION THAT STUDY GROUPS WOULD NOT BE PERMITTED TO ENTER CHILE IS A CONTRADICTIONARY SIGN, PERHAPS RESULTING FROM PRESIDENT PINOCHET'S PERSONAL DECISION ON THE ADVICE OF HIS IMMEDIATE, HARD-LINE ADVISERS. POPPER

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